

Attachment 2

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 26, 1999

Ms. Jamie R. Clark, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mail Stop 3012
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Clark:

At a time when we continue to make significant strides in boosting the responsible stewardship of America's fish and wildlife resources with a broad array of conservation partners, we are writing to ask for your support of a broad and balanced review of the National Fish Hatchery System that would make some determinations and recommendations about its proper role and overall mission in the conservation of America's fishery resources.

What would become the nation's first fish hatchery was created in 1872 with the establishment of a salmon egg collecting station on the McCloud River in California. In the 127 years since then, more than 280 hatcheries have been established to ensure the restoration of self-sustaining fish populations and the replacement of depleted or lost fisheries resources that are a result of federal development projects. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages 66 fish hatcheries, which play an integral role in the agency's statutory obligations regarding the restoration, recovery, and mitigation of fishery resources.

We understand that there is a wide and diverse field of opinion among many different stakeholders when it comes to the proper role, scope, and mission of the National Fish Hatchery System. We are aware that the Service is nearing completion of its Alignment, Appropriateness, and Adequacy Evaluation (the 3 A's), and that U.S. Rep. George Miller of California has asked the General Accounting Office to review the role and scope of the hatchery system. We believe that those are positive, important, and needed steps, if we are to set a viable, long-term course for the future of the hatchery system. We are also aware of your intention outlined in a May 25th Service-wide memorandum to refocus the future direction of the hatchery system. We are convinced as well that there should be one additional piece to this process.

With all of that in mind, we are recommending that an open, inclusive, and participatory dialogue be launched that builds on the "3 A's" evaluation and incorporates the results of the GAO review with the ultimate goal being to determine just what the future role of our fish hatchery system should be given the restoration, recovery, and mitigation needs it is not only currently addressing, but will be expected to meet well into the 21st Century.

We think it would benefit all stake-holders to convene a diverse committee that includes a broad spectrum of views regarding the hatchery system's future role from state fish and wildlife agencies and fisheries experts within the Service to fisheries conservation and angling organizations like Trout Unlimited, B.A.S.S., the American Sportfishing Association, the Izaak Walton League of America, and the American Fisheries Society. We suspect that this process will not always be simple and painless. Nevertheless, it is one that should be undertaken with the kind of inclusiveness that led to the enactment of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Once we are armed with the best scientific information, our fisheries managers will be able to chart a clear course with a well-defined mission for America's hatchery system that will allow it to meet its restoration, recovery, and mitigation obligations even better.

So in that spirit, we are soliciting your support in the facilitation of a process aimed at developing a clear vision and mission for the future role of the National Fish Hatchery System. It is our view that the successful partnerships we have relied upon to achieve important fisheries conservation achievements to date, will be needed to assure the fisheries conservation goals of the future.

Thank you for your important advocacy on behalf of our natural resources, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Ann L. Turner
Marian Berry
John P. Berry
John P. Berry
John P. Berry

Blake R. Lincoln
Chris Hollings
David C. Cullen
Michael H. Hogue
Shannon B. Buel

cc: Cathleen Short, Assistant Director for Fisheries